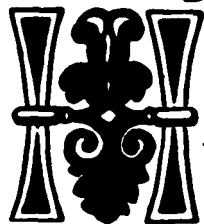


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A U B E R K

Feudal Ideals of Order
and Their Decline

EDITED BY LIAM O. PURDON
AND CINDY L. VITTO

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10 *The Roman de Jaufre* and the Illusions of Romance



ONE OF THE chief tasks facing the author of a medieval adventure romance is to reconcile the young men in his audience to their paradoxical social situation as members of a twelfth- or thirteenth-century court. These men are in service to a lord because of economic necessity, but they are told that their service has self-development as its purpose. They are likely to remain in service into their thirties or forties, if they survive that long, living in hope of a permanent escape from military service through marriage to a woman with a large dowry. As that reward is delayed, they are encouraged to persevere, both by temporary material pleasures and by literary assurances that their duties are proving grounds for individual worth. They hear stories about young men much like themselves, acting under the guidance of a benevolent leader—usually a king called “Arthur”—and following the code of conduct of a group of established knights; these fictional knights are invariably rewarded for following the socially acceptable path. The young men in the audience are promised, repeatedly, that a reward will come to them too, magically, and that it will be of a magnitude beyond their most extravagant dreams.

As poets attempt to gloss over the contradictions between the fictional world of their heroes and the concrete environment of their audiences, gaps appear in their poems into which evidence of that

audience's insoluble social problems can slip. Much recent scholarship has been devoted to such aspects of the works of Chrétien de Troyes, stripping away the vestiges of a nineteenth-century romanticism that located his poems in a timeless literary tradition ("mythical" in two senses of the word) stretching back into Celtic prehistory. Such studies have done a great deal to show us precisely how much the modern critical evaluation of such canonized texts depends on nineteenth-century attitudes and, conversely, how wasteful it has been to exclude a larger number of medieval poems that perhaps reveal even more about the societies that produced them.

For all its uniqueness—it is the only surviving Arthurian romance in Provençal¹—*Jaufre*² is not as well known as it ought to be, in part because the conditions under which it was composed led its author to treat the conventions of courtly and feudal life in a manner not pleasing to the scholars who established the romance canon. *Jaufre* offers an interesting set of contrasts with the general romance background in at least three important areas: its treatment of ideals surrounding King and Court; its attitude toward chivalry as an *ordo*; and its presentation of individual prowess in the context of a world moving toward warfare based on collective action. In each of these areas, the text's implied judgments may be related to the particular historical situation prevailing in Aragon-Catalonia at the time of the poem's composition.

The King and the Court

Jaufre is dedicated to a king, Jaume el Conqueridor of Aragon-Catalonia; at the time when it was composed, however, Jaume was not yet a conqueror and barely a king. If the poem was written before Jaume's stunning conquest of Mallorca in 1228–29, which seems likely,³ he would not have been out of his teens when the poet's praises of his nobility and generosity were first uttered. Despite this royal dedication, however, *Jaufre* does not seem to be an overtly monarchist poem. In fact, a reading of the first episode leaves many readers feeling that the poet must have felt nothing but contempt for kings and their immediate retinues, since he starts with a preliminary "fake adventure"⁴ in which Arthur and all of the knights of the Round Table are thoroughly mocked and degraded.

The poem opens with Arthur and his courtiers assembled at the traditional Pentecost feast, unable to begin eating until an adventure has

come. In other examples of this "dinner delayed" motif an adventure comes almost immediately,⁵ but this time the courtiers have to wait all afternoon; Arthur finally decides that they will have to go out and hunt one down, ignoring both the spirit and the etymology of "adventure."⁶ Once they are out in Brocéliande, they hear the cries of a woman in distress. Despite offers of assistance from Gawain, Arthur insists, impetuously and imperiously, that the adventure belongs to him alone. He finds that a strange beast has come down from the mountains to the woman's mill, and is busy gobbling up all her grain. When the beast pays no attention to Arthur's armed threats, he grabs it by the horns and tries to wrestle it to the ground. When his strength proves insufficient, he decides to punch it in the head, but his hands are glued fast to its horns. It lumbers off and goes up to the top of a cliff, dangling Arthur precariously over the edge. For safety's sake, the knights decide to make a pile of all their clothing so that Arthur will have something soft to land on. As they stand below, naked and distraught, the beast leaps from the cliff—and then transforms itself back into one of Arthur's knights. He has mastered all the liberal arts (including magic), and has earlier made a bet with the king that he could enchant him on a high feast day. The reward for his success is to be a gold cup, a fine horse, and a kiss from the most beautiful woman at court. Now that they have found an adventure, he explains, the king and his knights may begin the feast. After a scramble for clothing, everyone returns to the palace to eat (95–484).

Almost every surface detail of this episode promises successful adventure of the sort a romance audience would expect, but in every case the encounters lead to failure. Brocéliande is not the miraculous locale of the fountain of Calogrenant and Yvain (374–469, 800–811), the allegorical combat between good and evil of *Le Torneiment Anticrist*,⁷ or the enchanted prison of *Claris et Laris*.⁸ It is not a trackless wilderness dotted with magical chapels and inhabited only by hermits, but a rather ordinary region, close enough to civilization to have a mill. There is nothing mysterious about either the miller or the mill: both are simple participants in the ordinary economy of medieval society. The gigantic monster, in itself, resembles the ten-horned beast of Apocalypse 13:1 or the monstrous animal raised by Mohammed,⁹ but the confrontation which follows forestalls any such associations. This animal does not humble itself before a king, like Bucephalus

before Alexander;¹⁰ it is not subdued by knightly weapons, like those wielded by Richier in *Aspremont*;¹¹ it cannot be tamed by brute physical force, like the bulls that yield to the herdsman in *Yvain* (341–55). Arthur fails, his failure is observed by the knights of the Round Table, and his powerlessness quickly spreads through the ranks. Because of the circumstances, the knights are unable to do anything as knights to save their lord, despite their assertions that it is their duty to do so (286–92). Gawain throws away his lance and shield (321–22), and they all start lamenting, shredding their clothes and tearing their hair (350–68). The knights' decision to pile up their clothing puts them in a ludicrous position, especially since the beast's transformation, immediately afterwards, shows that the disrobing was unnecessary; in the context of the tradition, it must be seen as ridiculous.¹² The enchanter in *Jaufre* is no Merlin,¹³ but an ordinary courtier, fully integrated into Arthurian society, who has learned magic as if it were little more than the eighth liberal art;¹⁴ he does nothing but play games with his power, and his only purpose is to win a bet, for a reward which, on the practical level at least, seems quite trivial.

Shortly before the end of the poem, the poet takes the opportunity to show that this deficiency of the court is not a transitory situation. Arthur and his knights become involved in another marvelous adventure, during the wedding feast for *Jaufre* and *Brunissen*. A squire rushes in, interrupting the entertainment, and announces that he has been attacked by a huge bird, with a head as big as a barrel, feet as big as a door, and eyes which flash like carbuncles (9830–50). As before, Arthur takes up the challenge and, rejecting the aid of Gawain, Melian, and *Jaufre*, goes out alone to face the beast, just as impetuous and imperious as he was more than nine thousand lines before. He advances carefully with his sword and shield, but he simply angers the bird, which disarms him and carries him off into the sky (9885–904).

Arthur's followers fall into despair and lamentation, just as they have done in the *Brocéliande* episode. Finally, someone suggests that the mourners *do* something instead of just lamenting. A nameless count advises them to slaughter some cattle so that the bird will come down to eat them. This is done, in haste, but then the carcasses have to be dragged the distance of a good bowshot, for they have neglected

to lead the cows to the field where the bird is circling about. None of this matters very much, of course, for the bird simply flies off, carrying the hapless king. The marvelous bird turns out, once again, to be the court enchanter, and Arthur is released unharmed. He then turns his attention to the state of his knights' clothing. In *Brocéliande* the courtiers all disrobed; this time, they have ripped all their fine apparel into shreds. Arthur summons merchants from the town, and the next thirty-five lines are devoted to talk of fine furs and costly material, as if proper clothing were the major state issue of the day. Any reader who finds this all rather ridiculous will be thankful to the poet for cutting off his description of the couturiers plying their trade for the thousands of lords and ladies because "it would be tedious to hear" (10107); the poet's more general attitude toward fine clothing is apparent from the earlier address to the audience in which he compares worthless men in rich clothes to worm-eaten wooden vessels covered with costly paint (2599-602).

Arthur's adventures with the mutant bull and the giant bird are temporary affairs, games with fixed beginnings and ends that take place outside everyday life. A more serious episode of deficiency of the established court occurs at the one point in the narrative when the Round Table knights are challenged to put into practice their much-vaunted willingness (compare lines 24-52) to aid the oppressed. Fada de Gibel (her name is not revealed until much later) comes to Arthur to ask for a champion to aid her against the aptly named villain *Fellon d'Albarua*. He has taken all her lands except one small castle, and she has only a week to find a defender or she will have to surrender even that to him. Arthur is sympathetic and declares that anyone who helped such a maiden would win great honor, but the poet conveniently arranges to have the most suitable candidates absent from court. Gawain, or Yvain, or Jaufre could certainly help, says Arthur, but none of them is present. The lady's plea to the court's remaining knights falls on deaf ears:

Et anc negunz non sonet motz.
 E la piusela, auzent totz,
 Escrida: "Cavalliers, non sia!
 Per Dieu, no m'en torn a fadia!

Non sia esta cortz desmentida,
 C'om diga qu'ieu m'en tor fallida!"
 E negunz non a mut sonnat. [6329-335]

[But no one said a word. The maiden cried out so that all could hear, "Knights, it must not be! By God, do not let me return with a refusal! Do not let this court be defamed, don't let it be said that I left it disappointed!" But no one said a word.]

Fada de Gibel does not so much leave the court as vanish, in the space between two halves of a rhyming couplet. Her pleas are interrupted when a crowd of people arrives, bringing news of Jaufre's spectacular successes, and the court's attention turns instantly to them. All the lords and ladies of Cardueil listen intently to the tale of battle and the life histories of the defeated villain and his freed captive, but the one damsel in distress who comes to Cardueil in the whole course of the poem does not find a champion. In the "adventure" in Brocéliande, a story of an ersatz adventure was treated as if it were an adventure itself; here a story of an adventure is preferred to the challenge of a real adventure.

The *Jaufre*-Poet is making use of contrasts with the general set of romance norms to reveal systemic flaws in this court. In an insightful study of the decision-making process of a variety of courts in Arthurian romances, Dominique Boutet¹⁵ has distinguished three stages through which an ideal Arthurian-romance group proceeds in order to determine an effective course of action. The primary *raison d'être* of Arthurian society is to maintain order in the world, and the duty to rectify disorder is incumbent on all its members, the king as well as his entourage. The king is not an absolute monarch whose will is law, for his actions are governed by the *mos majorum*; nor is he simply *primus inter pares* since the initial stage is his personal and particular duty to perceive the disorder in the social situation and to decide to remedy the problem. The second stage requires consultation between king and council; the group as a whole is involved in strategic decisions concerning the sort of action to be taken, including, in the case of warfare, the size of the army to be sent out. The third and most concrete stage is dependent on the king alone, since he must make executive decisions and announces particular decrees; he chooses, for example, the individuals who will make up an expeditionary party.

In the court scenes of *Jaufre*, this orderly, sequential decision-making process is consistently short-circuited. At the Pentecost feast, Arthur decides, according to his own individual will, to breach the custom of his court. He takes no advice from his council concerning the choice to enter Brocéliande; when they hear the cry of the distraught woman, he decides simultaneously on the general strategy (one man will respond) and on the particular details (he will be that man). Once the king is out of commission, the role of counsel-initiator falls to Gawain, but in place of a reasoned group discussion and analysis, there is only one rather farfetched idea, which passes from knight to knight and wins general acceptance rather than rational assent. The response to the threat to order occasioned by the enchanter-as-bird follows a similar pattern, and results in a similar loss of dignity for the whole Round Table. The court, then, in this poem, does not function as the true home of the values to be acquired by the young knight who dominates the poem; on the contrary, a major portion of the poem's action is devoted to arranging his escape from the attitudes and behavior patterns of the court.

In order to effect this escape, the poet carefully establishes considerable distance between his hero and any person or group that might be seen as representing the past or the established social elite. *Jaufre* is nobly born, of course, as all romance heroes should be, but any possibility of paternal influence on the young man's career is systematically excluded. His father Dozon, otherwise completely unknown, is not mentioned until after *Jaufre* has been knighted. Despite the fact that Dozon is praised as a worthy member of the Round Table, the only thing we learn about him when he is first mentioned is the fact that he died not in proper chivalric combat but as a result of a wound from a crossbow during a siege. Later in the poem, his memory is invoked by Augier, one of his old companions in arms, as part of an attempt to induce *Jaufre* to give up his quest and settle down, as lord of a small castle, with his father's friend's daughter; politely but firmly, *Jaufre* refuses to be bound by the aspirations of the previous generation (4527-644). This rupture of the expected genetic continuity is matched in the poet's praise of the king to whom the poem is dedicated, for he is removed from his physical lineage and placed instead in a genealogy of virtues: he is the "father of Worth, the son of Generosity, the lord of Good Adventure" (62-63).

Viewed in the light of other contemporary materials from Catalonia, this tendency to erase the effects and diminish the power of preceding generations appears to be part of a widespread attempt to create a sharp break between the society of the past and the new regime inaugurated by Jaume I. This is especially evident in the Catalan chronicles in the sections dealing with King Jaume's father, Pere el Catòlic, and with the influence of older nobles on the young king's life. Pere died in the Battle of Muret, fighting against the Albigenian Crusaders under Simon de Montfort. He was engaged in a war to assist his own beleaguered and mistreated vassals, but his defeat and the fact that he was fighting against forces that had papal approval for their actions were both problems and embarrassments for later Catalan writers. His support for the "enemies of the faith" was variously explained as a result of family loyalty to his sisters, who were married to the lords of Toulouse¹⁶ and blamed on Occitan nobles who seduced him by offering him their beautiful wives and daughters.¹⁷ His defeat was attributed either to a lack of organization of his troops, or to the fact that he had spent the previous night carousing with loose women,¹⁸ or to his refusal to wait for reinforcements and his impetuous charge into the enemy forces without heed for basic survival tactics.¹⁹ When his son Jaume became king, without ever having known his father and after being raised by the Knights Templar, who were hostile to his father's projects, the simplest strategy for dealing with Pere was to reduce him to the status of an unfortunate detour in the glorious history of the lineage. While his father was alive, Jaume was called "Petrus" in court documents, after his father, or "Petrus Jacobi,"²⁰ but after his father's death he is called by the name his mother gave him as a result, we are told, of divine intervention.²¹ Within a few years, Jaume's conception was turned into a poetic story modeled on the conception of Galahad by the lascivious Lancelot: Jaume's mother, the saintly Maria of Montpelier, was introduced secretly into Pere's bed, we are told, when he was expecting to sleep with a young lady of the town who had caught his eye.²² Jaume's birth is presented as part of a long-term divine plan stretching back to the time of his grandparents, only incidentally involving the unlucky Pere.²³ Jaume's own decrees pointedly refer to his reaffirmation of the customs of "our ancestors," not "our father,"²⁴ and when later nationalist chroniclers wanted to assert the glory of the lineage of the Kings

of Aragon, they harked back to legendary stories of much earlier kings.²⁵ Jaume's relations with the surviving members of his father's retinue and family were constantly troubled, according to his autobiography, by their unbridled ambition and propensity for treachery; whenever one of them tries to play on family loyalty, the young king ultimately suffers for it.²⁶

The Chivalric Ordo

Romances played no small part in the propagation of the idea that warriors on horseback were, as members of an "order," different from other human beings. The Latin word *miles*, which had meant simply "soldier," and the French word *chevalier* and its cognates in other Romance languages, which had meant simply "horseman," had come by the early thirteenth century to designate a noble man who had been ritually inducted into a group of people following a code of behavior, with rules to govern every facet of life. The French verb *adoubier* and its cognates had originally meant simply "to give someone some armor," but by the period in question it had come to mean "to make someone a knight."²⁷ Giving a man his spurs, that is, had come to mean "giving a man his spurs." Each action in the dubbing ritual and each piece of equipment had been invested with symbolic significance, spelled out in detail by various writers of treatises on chivalry. The candidate is bathed to remind him of baptism and put in a comfortable bed to remind him of paradise. He is dressed in a white robe for purity and a scarlet cloak for the blood he is willing to sacrifice. The two edges of his sword stand for justice and loyalty, or, alternatively, for defending the poor and attacking the oppressor. Brown stockings are for the earth where his body will ultimately lie, and a white sash at his waist is for restraining his lust. The helmet signifies a sense of shame, and his spurs tell him to be as responsive to God's commands as a charger is to the prick of a spur. The kiss from the officiant is a sign of faith and peace.²⁸

Let us now examine how these ceremonial concerns are treated in *Jaufre*. Just after Jaufre arrives at Arthur's court, the villain Taulat rides in, kills an unarmed knight, and leaves, threatening to shame the king in this same way every year on the same day. Jaufre is given permission to avenge this insult; since he is only a squire, he must be properly knighted before he can undertake the task. He gets a



FIGURE 13. Knight struggling with heavy mail. Pierpont Morgan, MS 638, fol. 28, detail. Courtesy of the Pierpont Morgan Library.

condensed version of the ceremony, with no nightlong vigil, no bath, and no bed, but he gets the armor piece by piece, and the ceremony ends with King Arthur attaching the right spur and the sword and giving him the symbolic kiss. He goes outside and asks two handy bystanders where Taulat is, only to be told that he has waited around inside too long, and the villain is long gone (724–27). Because of the delay for the ritual, he takes another five thousand lines to catch up

with him. This is only the first of several indications that the poet sees some serious problems with the discrepancies between the ceremonial view of knighthood and the practical demands placed on a warrior in a violent society.

As he is riding along in pursuit of one villain, Jaufre meets another, a castellan named Estout de Vertfueil. Estout demands that he surrender his shield, his hauberk, his sword, and his horse. Jaufre refuses, saying, "I will not, because the good king gave them to me when he dubbed me a knight" (1044). He would rather fight to the death than give up the symbols of his newly won status as a Knight of the Round Table. In addition to being ceremonial tokens, however, these weapons are also physical objects, tools of the trade. Whatever their symbolic value, in combat the important thing is how well they function. Here, too, plot events, in the form of an apparently traditional combat scene, undercut the idealized view of the adventure romance hero. Jaufre slashes away at Estout with all his might, but he cannot pierce his armor. Estout seems to lack the sense of shame it is supposed to symbolize, but still his helmet resists numerous direct blows. On the other hand, Jaufre's shield is first pierced by Estout's lance and then sliced away bit by bit by Estout's sword. His hauberk is ripped, his helmet is shattered, a glancing blow shears off his spur, and his sword breaks in half (1055-1123). The ceremonial armor is useless, or rather worse than useless since it inspires false confidence. When it is all over, Jaufre prudently rearms himself in the weapons of the villain: a helmet that cannot be cut, a shield that cannot be pierced, an irresistible sword—armor with no lofty symbolic value (1178-81).

The dubbing ceremony had, by the early thirteenth century, acquired a quasi-sacramental character throughout western Europe, but the Albigensian Crusaders, the opponents of the Catalans and Aragonese for whom the poet was writing, went further than anyone else. Simon de Montfort had his young son Amaury made a knight in a ritual presided over by the Bishop of Orléans.²⁹ In *Jaufre*, the plot makes it clear that the qualities esteemed by the knightly order—justice, loyalty, and the willingness to risk one's life to aid others—are not part of the genetic inheritance of every youth of noble birth and are not sacramentally transferable through the ceremony of dubbing. As the story proceeds, Jaufre will be put through a series of experiences that create in him a subtly modified version of those qualities,

but the poet makes it clear that such a process can begin only after the hero has been "un-dubbed."

Modes of Combat

The most universal ploy for reconciling a romance audience to its social condition is the assumption—treated as axiomatic—that individual action, if it follows the rules and conventions of the *ordo*, leads to individual success and has a significant effect on the general well-being and harmony of the knight's own court and of the world beyond the walls. Once he sets forth from the court, the romance hero is free of the direct control of the lord, but he is now subject to a set of internalized norms of behavior. He is expected to use the weapons of his order according to a set of socially sanctioned military procedures in an attempt to live up to and enforce the moral values symbolized by those pieces of armor. Neither the battle rules nor the chivalric values are to be seen as an impediment to success, of course; rather, his proper use of his metal and moral equipment is shown leading directly to success, and temporary setbacks may be attributed to momentary lapses. He is stern in his opposition to wrongdoers but quick to grant mercy to the defeated; he devotes his energy not only to responding to the initial challenge to his court but also to rescuing the victims of subsidiary villains; he meets a rich and beautiful maiden, and, with the approval of the home office, marries her and lives out his life in honor, dispensing her wealth to her vassals to ensure their loyalty to him.

The new knight is expected to demonstrate his virtues in a series of proper chivalric combats with men of his own class who have gone slightly astray. The *Jaufre-Poet*, in contrast, sends his hero through a sequence of adventures with opponents who do not share the perspective of the chivalric order. Each separate encounter challenges the assumptions of the code, and the genre's characteristic episodic structure is used to show a progressive degradation of the ideal. Perhaps the most obvious sign of this descent may be seen in the social class of *Jaufre's* opponents: his first fight is with a castellan, the second with a knight, the third with a foot soldier, the fourth with a giant leper. In each encounter the mode of combat and the tactics needed for victory become less refined and more grossly physical.

If Jaufre had adhered to the code, he would have been killed or captured by line 1200. The battle with Estout begins properly enough, but after Jaufre's armor is shredded, he is victorious only because he stuns Estout and then squeezes him so hard that his ribs break—a most unchivalric maneuver. The combat with the Knight of the White Lance follows the appropriate path, but Jaufre ends it by denying mercy to his defeated opponent and hanging him on a nearby tree, where his own victims had formerly been displayed. The footsoldier attacks him not with lance and sword, but with a coward's weapons, darts and stones. He leaps on the back of Jaufre's horse, puts a knife to his neck, and forces him to ride toward a prison where he keeps his captives. Jaufre succeeds here again by adopting the tactics of a streetfighter: he waits for a moment of inattention, grabs the arm with the knife and twists it until it breaks, pulls off the soldier's left arm, and hurls him to the ground. Then, to ensure that no other travelers will be robbed, he cuts off the soldier's feet (1856–80). The last opponent in the sequence is the giant leper, who has bashed out an innocent knight's brains on a rock, is trying to rape a beautiful young damsel, and is systematically butchering babies to bathe in their blood and cure his disease. The giant's weapon is a club. When he connects, the blow sends Jaufre reeling; when he misses and strikes the floor or the columns of the house, the whole building shakes. The leper is so tall that Jaufre's sword can reach no higher than his hip; finally he is able to cut through his leg, and when the giant falls, Jaufre splits his skull. Still, the fight is not over. In a death spasm, the giant's remaining good leg kicks Jaufre in the groin and sends him flying across the room into a wall. He is so stunned that when the damsel in distress throws water in his face, he strikes out at her, thinking it is the giant. Fortunately, since he has dropped his sword, he simply knocks her down instead of decapitating her.

It may well be that all members of a warrior society realize, deep down, that human combat is brutal and brutish and that only a fool keeps to the rules: but there seems to be something quite appropriate in the fact that the poet's society was one that had just undergone a crushing defeat. The Albigensian Crusade was a notoriously barbarous affair, with acts of extreme cruelty on both sides earning astonishing praise from their respective propagandists. The winners, of

course, were able to see glory in death, in the occasional reversal: they tell us that the body of Simon de Montfort, killed by a stone-throwing machine operated by the women of Toulouse, was pierced by five arrows in token of the wounds of Christ.³⁰ It was left to the vanquished to create a romance in which the first stage of the hero's education is the lesson that one must be willing to abandon lofty ideals about knightly weaponry and knightly behavior in order to survive.

In romances, and frequently in chansons de geste, single combat is the battle mode of choice. Two knights square off against each other, either on a crowded battlefield, or on a lonely forest path, or in an organized tournament observed by admiring noble damsels. They charge each other, with couched lances, and one or both fall to the ground. Vigorous swordplay follows, and continues until one of the warriors is defeated. In the chansons de geste he is generally killed; in the romances, he cries mercy and leaves the field in dishonor. The realities of early thirteenth-century warfare were quite different. Cities and castles were captured not because the chosen champion of one side defeated a hero from the other side, but because the besiegers broke through the wall with huge engines, or because the besieged succumbed to starvation or dysentery. Pere el Catòlic, Jaume's father, fighting against the Crusaders to protect his Occitan vassals, called out "I am the King" to rally his beleaguered troops—one thinks of Arthur's impatience as he claims the battle with the mutant bull or the giant bird—and was cut down by a crowd of mercenaries.

Romance that it is, *Jaufre* tends, as a whole, to support the dominant fantastic ideal of a world in which individual chivalric activity is successful in bringing about changes both to the knight's status and to the condition of the oppressed. The hero defeats Taulat and rescues Melian in a one-on-one joust, an action that contributes to his success in winning Brunissen. *Jaufre's* individual talent rescues Fada de Gibel from Fellon d'Albarua: such victories earn him honor from both the rescued victims and from the older established knights of the Round Table. There is one situation, however, when a contradiction in the narrative draws our attention to the fantastic nature of the romance portrayal of the solitary knight.

During the time that Melian has been kept captive by Taulat and, in complete violation of the chivalric code, tortured by being whipped up a mountain naked, once a month, until his wounds open again,

five hundred of his vassals have set out, one by one, to defeat Taulat and rescue their lord. Each of them has been defeated, in sequence, and when the story opens, they are all camped around Taulat's castle, patiently waiting for a rescuer. Back in his own country, Melian's people display their love for him and their grief over his captivity by falling into extreme mourning and lamentation four times a day and by attacking anyone who asks them the reason for their strange behavior. Jaufre, who does not yet know about the captive Melian, is repeatedly pummeled with swords and sticks and, on one occasion, a small dog when he is foolish enough to ask why these people are tearing their hair, scratching their faces, and falling to the floor from their full height. A modern observer of such a situation, as ignorant of the rules regarding the willing suspension of disbelief as Jaufre is of the cause for this lamentation, might well ask different questions. Why, instead of lamenting their lord so pointlessly and self-destructively, do not these people *do* something about his wretched situation? Why, instead of fighting Taulat one at a time despite his obvious superiority in such a mode of combat, do they not attack him *en masse*, given that there are thousands of them in the castle of Monbrun, many more in other surrounding castles, and even five hundred ready to be a fifth column within Taulat's own domain?

This question really is impudent. It violates the rules of the genre and attacks the presuppositions of all adventure romances and most *chansons de geste*. To ask it, as a modern critic, may seem as irrelevant as for a biblical scholar to ask why, if an omnipotent God wants the Israelites in the Promised Land, he doesn't just pick them up and put them there instead of going through the whole rigmarole of hardening Pharaoh's heart, sending plagues, and parting the waters. A romance author who showed such a massed assault succeeding against a villain would explode the whole genre from the inside, and romance castles would now fall to mercenary armies and the ravages of dysentery, just like castles in the real world. The *Jaufre*-Poet cannot ask these questions and still remain a romance poet. He can, however, come close to suggesting that even the most basic principle of his genre is a sham.

Immediately after the episode with the lepers, Jaufre finds himself in a beautiful garden attached to the castle of Monbrun. Because he is there, the birds do not sing, and because they are not singing, Lady

Brunissen cannot sleep between her episodes of violent mourning for her imprisoned overlord. She sends out her seneschal to rectify the situation by killing or capturing the intruder. He awakens Jaufre, challenges him to a couched-lance horseback duel, and loses. A second Monbrun knight comes down, fights Jaufre, and loses. A third Monbrun knight comes down, fights Jaufre, and loses—although Jaufre is so exhausted that he thinks it is the same man coming back again and again. At this point, the seneschal says, "I advise you not to send a knight alone, or he will deal with each man of Monbrun in the same way" (3520), and Lady Brunissen replies, "I have plenty of worthless knights; fifty or a hundred or more if it's necessary, can go there, and I'll see if they can bring him back to me."

Other adventure romances raise the possibility of a collective expedition against the hero. In *Blandin de Cornoalha* (1166–248), ten knights bar Blandin's way into a palace where his Sleeping Beauty is imprisoned. He kills the first four, one at a time, including their leader. The other six are demoralized and surrender. In Chrétien's *Erec*, a lecherous count leads a hundred warriors against the hero to steal his beautiful wife. The count is wounded, sees the error of his ways, and calls off the attack (3592–3652). In *Jaufre*, there is no leader and no chance for one-on-one battles. A whole crowd of nameless knights runs down from the palace to the garden, and

. . . qui pot avenir premiers
 Qel pren, e aqo volenters.
 Qil pren per cambas, qi per bratz,
 Qi per cueisas, qi per costatz,
 Qi per espatlas, qi per testa. [3537–41]

[Whoever could get there first grabbed him, and willingly. One took his legs, another his arms, his thighs, his sides, his shoulders, his head.]

He is carted off unceremoniously into the palace, where he is totally at the mercy of the beautiful Brunissen.

The realities of nameless collective power are suppressed, however, almost as soon as they are recognized. Jaufre escapes and goes on to triumph in more crucial single battles. He wins Lady Brunissen's love, and after the detour in which he is forced to defend the damsel

in distress, again in single combat, he marries his lady at an elaborate feast at Arthur's court. He returns to her castle to dispense her wealth to her followers and to win gratitude for himself and the same sort of social security with which traditional romance heroes are rewarded. This is, after all, a romance, and the broad rhetorical structures of the genre are ultimately triumphant.

If the Impudent Question had been asked, I do not believe that the poet would have been pummeled with swords and axes and small dogs, if only because the Court of Aragon had a long tradition of hospitality toward troubadours. But the question was not asked, and the implications of the episodes that might have provoked it were not carried through to their logical conclusions. The little surviving medieval evidence for the poem's reception shows the victory of the generic form. For Ramon Muntaner, a Catalan chronicler writing a hundred years later, Jaufre is no more than one of a list of heroes, including Lancelot and Roland, to be trotted out for comparison with his own real-life warrior heroes.³¹ *Jaufre* was translated into Castilian prose,³² leaving out all the episodes that bring discredit on Arthur's court or challenge dominant attitudes toward honor and individual valor. Although Catalonia and Provence did not become centers of romance production, French texts received enduring attention and admiration in the region even after they had gone out of fashion in the best circles in France and had lost their social relevance. Jaufre's exploits were made into painted decorations for the palace of a King of Aragon called Pere the Ceremonious; one of the manifestations of his ceremoniousness was a translation from Castilian into Catalan of Alfonso el Sabio's *Treatise on Chivalry*, complete with its emphasis on noble birth, on the rules of single combat, on the symbolic significance of ritual dubbing. This treatise informs us that *caballeros* are so named not because of anything so mundane as the fact that they ride around on *caballos*, but because knights are the most honorable of men just as horses are the most honorable of ridable animals.³³

Notes

1. *Blandin de Cornoalha*, ed. C. H. M. Van Der Horst (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), follows much the same pattern as an Arthurian romance, but there is no mention of Arthur. Guilhem de Torroella's *La Faula*, ed. Pere Bohigas and Jaume Vidal Alcover (Tarragona: Edicions Tàrraco, 1984), has a great deal of Arthur but little of the structure of an adventure romance.

2. *Jaufré: Roman arthurien du XIII^e siècle en vers provençaux*, ed. Clovis Brunel (Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1943). References in the text are to line numbers in this version.

3. There has been considerable debate, of course, over the year of the composition and over the identity of the King of Aragon mentioned in lines 58ff. For a full bibliography on the question, see Francois Pirot, *Recherches sur les connaissances littéraires des troubadours occitans et catalans des XI^e et XIII^e siècles* (Barcelona: Real Academia de Buenas Letras, 1972), 498–506; Pirot's conclusions, like those of Rita Lejeune and Marti de Riquer, that *Jaufre* as we have it—or at least a portion thereof—dates back to the third quarter of the twelfth century, have not met with widespread approval.

4. The Hunt for the White Stag in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1978), ll. 27–80, 279–341, 1733–84, and the adventure of Calogrenant in *Yvain*, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1978), ll. 142–580, perform similar functions.

5. In *La Queste del Saint Graal*, ed. Albert Pauphilet (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1975), 4–5, Kay intervenes after Arthur has forgotten not to eat; immediately afterward, it is reported that there is a stone floating on the water outside. In *Li Chevaliers as Deus Espees*, ed. Wendelin Foerster (Halle: Niemeyer, 1877; rpt. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1966), ll. 157ff., Arthur does not feel like eating because no adventure has come, despite the fact that he is holding a magnificent feast; the problem is no sooner mentioned than a threatening messenger arrives from the King of Outre-Ombre. In *Sir Gauvain and the Green Knight*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, rev. N. O. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), the custom is announced in lines 85–99, and then, following a list of those present at the feast and a brief reference to the food served to them (for here only Arthur must fast), the strange and ominous Green Knight arrives at line 136.

6. *Jaufre* is not the only example in which the anticipated adventure is slow in coming. In *La Vengeance de Raguidel*, in Raoul de Houdenc, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2, ed. M. Friedwanger (Halle, 1909; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1975), ll. 18ff., the narrator announces the custom and, immediately afterward, the lack of an appropriate adventure; Arthur is so upset that he goes off to his room and tosses and turns all night until he sees a marvelous ship, with only one passenger, a dead knight whose body has been pierced by a lance (ll. 105–29). Arthur is overjoyed that an adventure has finally come to his court, and not because it means that he can eat. Rather, the arrival of the ship is a sign of divine approval for his steadfast adherence to the custom (ll. 137–39). In *Le Haut Livre du Graal: Perlesvaus*, ed. W. A. Nitze and T. A. Jenkins (1932; rpt. New York: Phaeton, 1972), the lack of adventure can be rectified only when Arthur submits to the rules of a very well-defined adventure at the chapel of Saint Augustine in the White Forest: breaching the rules results in the death of one of his followers. In comparison, Arthur's personal decision in *Jaufre* to "get" an adventure on his own terms seems rather shocking.

7. Huon de Méri, *Le Torneiment Anticrist*, ed. M. O. Bender (University, Miss.: Romance Monographs, 1976).

8. *Clariss et Laris*, ed. J. Alton, *Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart* 169 (1884).
9. *Embricon de Mayence, Le Vie de Mahomet*, ed. Guy Cambrier (Brussels: Lato-mus, 1962), ll. 369-86.
10. See *The Medieval French Roman d'Alexandre*, vol. 2, *Version of Alexandre de Paris*, ed. E. C. Armstrong, D. L. Buffum, Bateman Edwards and L. F. H. Lowe (Prince-ton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1937), ll. 429-33 and 461-63.
11. *La Chanson d'Aspremont*, ed. Louis Brandin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1919-20), ll. 1822-34.
12. In her survey of all the examples of nudity in the romance corpus (except, of course, the "anomalous" *Jaufre*), Danielle Regnier-Bohler, "Le corps mis à nu: Per-ception et valeur symbolique de la nudité dans les récits du Moyen Âge," *Europe*, no. 654 (October 1983):51-62, has shown that male nudity always represents a state of transition: the disrobing is a sign of segregation, exile from collective life, to be followed by a ritual reintegration into society through a formalized reinvestment with the visible signs of one's place in society. The best-known example, Yvain's mad disrobing after he has violated his covenant with Laudine (ll. 2776ff.), is in many ways the most typical. The knights in *Jaufre*, however, make a rational and social choice to remove their clothes, and do not go through any kind of purgative regression to a state of nature. When they get dressed again, "negus anc noi a triat, / Qui pren capa, qui pren mantel" (no one was too choosy about who took whose cape or mantle) (ll. 476-77); the re-clothing is not a sign of the reestablishment of individual identity, but reveals the courtiers as an undifferentiated crowd.
13. William Calin, "Toward a New Reading of *Jaufre*: A Dialogue with Marc-René Jung," in *Studia Occitanica in Memoriam Paul Remy*, 2 vols., ed. Hans-Erich Keller (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan Uni-versity, 1986), vol. 2, *The Narrative-Philology*, calls him "a Merlin-figure" (14); in the same volume, Ann Tukey Harrison, "Arthurian Women in *Jaufre*," goes so far as to declare that he is "Merlin in disguise" (66); and Jean-Charles Huchet, "Le roman à nu: *Jaufre*," *Littérature* 74 (1989), calls him "Celui qui ici occupe la place de Merlin" (93). There are similarities, to be sure, but in my view they are more than out-weighed by the differences.
14. As Yves Lefevre notes, in "Partenopeus de Blois," in *Grundriss der Romanis-chen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, IV/1, ed. Jean Frappier and Reinhold R. Grimm (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1984), a comparable revelation that the magic of Melior in *Partenopeus* is the product of education "ôte en une certaine mesure tout caractère surnaturel au merveilleux qui pénètre jusque-là le roman" (275).
15. Dominique Boutet, "Carrefours idéologiques de la royauté arthurienne," *Ca-hiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 28 (1985):3-17.
16. *Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium: Textos Llatí i Català*, ed. L. Barrau Dihigo and J. Massó Torrents (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1925), 18, 53, 140-41.
17. Jaume I, *Crònica, o Llibre dels Feits*, pp. 1-402 of *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*, ed. Ferran Soldevila (Barcelona: Editorial Selecta, 1971), chap. 8.
18. *Llibre dels Feits*, chap. 9.

19. Bernat Desclot, *Llibre del Rei En Pere*, pp. 405–664 of Soldevila, *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*, chap. 6.
20. Ferran Soldevila, *Els Primers Temps de Jaume I* (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1968), 12, 24.
21. *Llibre dels Feits*, chap. 5.
22. Bernat Desclot, *Llibre del Rei En Pere*, chap. 4, and Ramon Muntaner, *Crònica*, pp. 667–1000 of Soldevila, *Les Quatre Grans Cròniques*, chaps. 3–6. Although written considerably later than the events, these chronicles contain prosified versions of near-contemporary popular poems on the subject. See Soldevila's notes and Beatrice Concheff, "The Hypothetical Epic Narrative Sources for the Catalan Chronicles of Jaume I, Desclot and Muntaner" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1976).
23. According to the story, Jaume's paternal grandfather was supposed to marry his maternal grandmother, but the marriage never took place. Still, by the grace of God, the bloodlines were united in the next generation: "E Nostre Senyor volc per aquella promesa que el rei havia feta primerament, co és a saber, que seria sa muller la filla de l'emperador Manuel, que aquella tornàs en son lloc: e par-ho en açò que la neta de l'emperador Manuel fo puis muller de nostre pare on nós venim. E per açò és obra de Déu que aquella convinença que no es complí en aquell temps, se complí depuis quan nostre pare pres per muller la neta de l'Emperador" (*Llibre dels Feits*, chap. 7). The whole story is a romanticization of a rather more sordid affair with a rather different cast of characters than Jaume believed; see Winfried Hecht, "Zur Geschichte der 'Kaiserin' von Montpellier, Eudoxia Comnena" *Revue des Études Byzantines* 26 (1968):161–69.
24. See, for example, Jaume's charter reestablishing the constitution of the Peace of God on December 21, 1288: "volentes antecessorum nostrorum sequi vestigia et exempla"; quoted in Gener Gonzalo i Bou, *La Pau i la Treva a Catalunya: Origen de les Corts Catalans* (Barcelona: Edicions de la Magrana, 1986), 132.
25. Immediately after his description of the death of Pere el Catòlic, Bernat Desclot, *Llibre del Rei En Pere*, proceeds (chaps. 7–10) to a lengthy retelling of the legendary tale of the Earl of Toulouse and the Empress of Alemaine, with either Ramon Berengar III or Ramon Berengar IV playing the lead role. This story serves to justify Catalan claims on Provence, as Soldevila notes (600); but Desclot avoids a reference to the rights of Pere el Catòlic, and turns instead to those of a Catalan monarch perhaps as much as a hundred years earlier.
26. The earlier chapters of the *Llibre dels Feits* are devoted to Jaume's descriptions of his difficult relations with the nobles of the previous generation; see especially chaps. 20 and 21.
27. See Jean Flori, *L'idéologie du glaive: Préhistoire de la chevalerie* (Geneva: Droz, 1983) and *L'Essor de la chevalerie: XI^e-XII^e siècles* (Geneva: Droz, 1986), subject to the criticisms of Michel Stanesco, *Jeux d'errance du chevalier médiéval* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 45–49.
28. See the various versions of these clerical decodings of the dubbing ceremony in the *Ordene de Chevalerie*, in Keith Busby, *Raoul de Houdenc: Le Roman des Eles, and The Anonymous Ordene de Chevalerie* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1983),

and Ramon Llull, *Llibre de l'Orde de Cavalleria*, ed. Marina Gustà (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1980).

29. Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1984), 75.

30. Pierre de Vaulx-Cernay, *Histoire de la guerre des Albigeois*, in *Collection des memoires relatifs à l'histoire de France*, 31 vols., ed. F. Guizot (Paris: J.-L.-J. Brière, 1824), 14:343.

31. *Crònica*, chaps. 116 and 148; compare chaps. 51, 128, and 134.

32. *Crònica de los Muy Notables Caualleros Tablante de Ricamonte y de Jofre, Hijo del Conde Don Ason*, in *Libros de Caballerias*, pt. 1, ed. Adolfo Bonilla y San Martin (Madrid: Bailly-Baillière é Hijos, 1907).

33. "Mas en Espanya apellem 'cavalleria' no per ço com van encavalgats en cavalls, mas per tal com, bé axí com los que van en cavalls van plus honradament que en altra bestia, axi meseix los que són elets a ésser cavallers són plus honrats que tots los altres defensors" (Pere III, *Tractat de Cavalleria*, ed. Pere Bohigas [Barcelona: Barcino, 1947], 112-13).